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## Control Foot Rot in Sheep

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# Control Foot Rot in Sheep

Departments of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine

Foot rot in sheep is persistent and extremely difficult to eradicate. The main symptom is severe lameness.

Foot rot is a bacterial infection. It is infectious and contagious. It usually spreads from one sheep to another through the mud. It starts with a small sore on the inside of the claws or in the soft tissue of the heel. From there it spreads under the sole and inside the horny wall of the hoof. The horn of the hoof will separate from the tissue beneath and a dirty-gray, cheesy material forms. This diseased tissue is very foul smelling. Foot rot must be eradicated, or at least controlled, or it will put a sheep man out of business.

Foot rot develops more rapidly when sheep are on wet ground, such as swampy pastures or muddy barn lots.

## To Avoid Foot Rot in Sheep

1. Trim sheep's feet every spring and fall--oftener if necessary. A pruning shears works well for this job.
2. Avoid mud around gates, barn lots and pastures. The organism spreads in mud.
3. Do not use cinders to fill mud holes or to make roads. They are sharp and will puncture a sheep's foot.

4. Do not buy sheep from farms where sheep have foot rot. Isolate newly purchased animals.

## Treatment

1. Examine the feet of every sheep in the flock. Trim their feet. All feet that show anything wrong must be thoroughly trimmed. Cut away the horn so that every spot of infection is exposed. Often the foot will bleed profusely.
2. Do not allow sheep with foot rot to run with the flock. Keep them by themselves where it is dry.
3. Walk the sheep through a foot bath containing a saturated solution of copper sulfate. Dissolve 20 pounds of copper sulfate in 10 gallons of water. This should be done two or three times each week.
4. Do not let foot rot get a start. Whenever a sheep is lame, trim her feet, put her where there is no mud and soak her foot in a saturated solution of copper sulfate. This may be kept in an earthenware jar for individual treatment.

Treatment for foot rot is 90% trimming.

It may take 6 months or even longer to completely eradicate foot rot. Consult your veterinarian for specific treatments.